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ABSTRACT

This book presents a method for the qualitative assessment of text difficulty, a method that relies on a total impression rather than on an analysis of text features. The method is based on matching samples of text to exemplars that have been scaled for comprehension difficulty. These exemplars range in difficulty from those suitable for the reading ability of first graders to those requiring the most advanced, sophisticated level of reading ability, that are typically suitable for college graduates. The qualitative method avoids some of the shortcomings of objective measures of text difficulty, especially the usually limited focus on semantic and syntactic measures. The scales can be used for estimating the comprehension difficulty of texts and for introducing parents and teachers to the processes of learning to read and improving reading skills. The sets of exemplars are grouped according to subject in the following categories: (1) literature; (2) popular fiction; (3) life sciences; (4) physical sciences; (5) narrative social studies; and (6) expository social studies. The first section of the book discusses methods and uses of the scales, and the second provides a manual for the qualitative assessment of texts. The third section is a discussion and analysis of the scaled passages, and the fourth section reviews the scientific basis for qualitative assessment. Three appendixes contain reproductions of literature passages, evidence for the scientific basis of the scales, and bibliographic information on the scale passages. (Contains 4 tables and 46 references.) (SLD)

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